

I have brought with me some of the best and the brightest in Canadian industry. They are world leaders in many fields, world-class achievers with a history of intense involvement and interest in Dubai and your region. Their strengths are Canada's strengths. They are at the leading edge of Canadian industry in a variety of sectors: telecommunications, transportation, energy, education, agriculture, financial services, engineering and mining. There are significant opportunities for working together. It is a partnership I believe we must pursue.

That involves getting to know your needs and priorities. It involves forming strategic alliances and joint ventures, utilizing your advantages and ours in a common quest for success. It also involves the development of trust and confidence, something which I believe already exists and which can be strengthened still further by this visit and future contacts.

The Canadian presence in Dubai is already substantial. There are almost 500 Canadians here working in many fields from education to engineering, health care to banking. That demonstrates the trust they have -- a trust we share -- in the tremendous potential of Dubai and our commercial relationship with you. In addition, there are some 100 students from the United Arab Emirates in Canada, training as doctors and engineers, lawyers and managers. That too is a relationship we value. It enhances your appreciation and understanding of Canada and it also increases our knowledge of your country and culture, whose achievements are so many. We look forward to a continued expansion in the number of your citizens visiting Canada.

Many of you will be aware that Canada was forced to close its Embassy in the Emirates in 1987. That was a painful decision for us, one which paralleled others we had to take elsewhere. It was a measure required by our need to reduce government expenditures in order to bring our deficit under control. Controlling and reducing that deficit and the government expenditures which contribute to it has been a priority of our government. It makes Canada a stronger economy, a more attractive place to invest, a more promising partner for trade. We are succeeding in that task.

We attempted to compensate for the closure of that Embassy by ensuring regular and intensive coverage by our post in Kuwait. I believe that has worked well. But I also believe that now is the time to move forward with a more active trade presence here, in Dubai.

I am pleased that with the initiative of our private sector, we are able to announce the opening of a Canada Trade Centre in Dubai. It will be operated by the Canada-Arab Business Council. The Chairman of the Canada-Arab Business Council, Mr. Lambert